NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

O Wisdom

Sisters of the Monastery of Mount St. Scholastica | Dec. 3, 2014 Spiritual Reflections
Advent 2014

O Wisdom guiding creation with love, fill us with wonder.

Love flowing from the wisdom of God is easily seen in our daily actions. I recall watching my 3-year-old niece set the table for her adored 5-year-old brother's birthday party: The plates, spoons, napkins and finally the centerpiece were in place. There was only one thing wrong: The birthday was three days away. I said to my sister, "Do you want her playing with the table setting?" She said, "Yes, anticipation is part of the fun." So I learned the difference between waiting and anticipation, between standing in line and Advent.

-- Sr. Deborah Peters

What are the O Antiphons?

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops describes the Advent O Antiphons [1] as "a magnificent theology that uses ancient biblical imagery drawn from the messianic hopes of the Old Testament to proclaim the coming Christ as the fulfillment not only of Old Testament hopes, but present ones as well."

An antiphon in religious tradition is a psalm or hymn chanted by alternating voices. It is also a brief passage from the Scriptures that is prayed or sung during the liturgy. The O Antiphons refer to seven prayers recited during the Advent time known as the Octave before Christmas (Dec. 17-23). These antiphons, beginning with "O," are followed by a title for the Messiah: O Wisdom, O Root of Jesse, O Emmanuel, etc., so familiar to us from our Advent hymns and Scriptures.

While the exact time of origin of these antiphons is not known, they have been chanted in monasteries and used in liturgical celebrations in Rome since the eighth century. Traditionally, seven antiphons are usually sung, though other traditions have added to this.

During December, NCRonline.org will offer an antiphon a day during each day of Advent (Dec. 1-24) from sisters of the Monastery of Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, Kan. In this time of waiting and longing for the coming of the Messiah, please join us in calling upon Emmanuel -- God with us -- to renew our hearts and come yet again as dawn spills into the winter darkness.

[The Monastery of Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, Kan., is home to 140 Benedictine sisters whose presence has been in the Kansas-Missouri area for the last 150 years. While primarily engaged in education, the sisters also sponsor the Keeler Women's Center; Sophia Center, which houses their spirituality programs; and Maur Hill-Mount Academy and Benedictine College, which they co-sponsor with St. Benedict's Abbey.]

Editor's note: Enjoying the antiphons? Sign up for our Spiritual Reflections email alert to receive Scripture reflections throughout Advent and the rest of the year:Email alert sign-up[2].

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Links:
[1] http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers/the-o-antiphons-of-advent.cfm
[2] http://ncronline.org/email-alert-signup